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THE BIBLE IN NEO-HEBRAIC POETRY.

THE Bible has ever remained a source of inspiration to poets and thinkers. But in no province of the literary realm has its influence been more remarkable than in the development of the Neo-Hebraic poetry which had its rise in the seventh century, and attained its fullest perfection towards the end of the fourteenth century. To the Hebrew poets of that period, studies of the Bible, in their Halachic and Agadic form, were the all in all. They not only imbibed the spirit of Scripture but made liberal use of its letter—now as silver setting, now as golden adornment—wherewith to grace and beautify their poetic compositions. Some writers made use of sacred passages as a kind of framework for their compositions, as charming edges to ornament their poetic textures; whilst others handled scriptural verses and phrases in so artistic and skilful a manner as to give them new point and fresh meaning. By this happy and ingenious use of Biblical texts they furnished additional testimony to the marvellous elasticity of the otherwise small range of Biblical idiom. They showed most clearly that from a linguistic and literary, no less than from a moral and religious point of view, the Bible was, in the language of the Jewish fathers, a great and wonderful book, to which “one might turn and turn again, for everything was in it.”

In this paper it is proposed to give a short illustration of the chief uses of the Bible in Neo-Hebraic poetry: and for the sake of clearness and definiteness the subject will be treated under the following heads:—

- I. Biblical phrases as a Framework.
- II. Allusive Use.
- III. Quasi-Midrashic Use.
- IV. Use of Proper Names as Appellatives.
- V. Mnemonic Use.
- VI. Miscellaneous Uses.

I. *Biblical phrases as a Framework.*

A glance at Jewish liturgic poetry shows how freely the Bible was used as an ornamental framework in these compositions. Their authors — commonly called *Poetanim*¹ — strove to introduce as much of the *ipsissima verba* of the Bible as possible, and seem to have vied with each other in the art and skill of accomplishing their object. Thus it is that we have various methods in the employment of Biblical passages as framework for the construction of verse material; in some cases a mere glance at a *Piyut* suffices to reveal the Biblical setting, in others a dissection or transposition may be required to lay bare the winding thread of Biblical quotation which runs through them. The simplest process is the employment of a Biblical text as the strophic refrain of a poem, hymn, or dirge, such as, for example, we have in the Passover Seder hymns, the oldest of the kind extant:—

(1) ויהי בחצי הלילה “And it came to pass in the middle of the night.”

(2) ואמרתם זבח פסח “And ye shall say, it is a Paschal offering.”

An instance of a more elaborate intertwining of Bible matter into Hebrew liturgic poetry is presented in the dirge for the ninth of Ab, beginning שבת סורו מני, a composition of Eleazar Kalir. But the uses of the Bible in this connexion, to which I desire to draw particular attention, lie midway between the refrain and the complex quotation.

¹ See JEWISH QUARTERLY REVIEW, vol. VI, p. 652.

They are fairly representative of a few specific types. One of these is the use of a continuous and connected Biblical passage. The first Piyut for the second day of Succoth (Tabernacles), beginning **אֲמַיִן לְפָנָיו וְאִיִּים** ¹ "I will ascribe strength to the revered and dreaded one," is a regular poem consisting of twenty-five stanzas, adapted to the letters of the Hebrew alphabet ². Every stanza falls into three divisions, the last of which contains a Biblical passage. All the passages of the first nineteen stanzas in their consecutive order form, with but few slight irregularities and some omissions, a connected Bible reading from Lev. xxiii, a passage bearing on the Feast of Tabernacles ³. The occurrence, however, of a complete scriptural passage in the Piyutim is rather rare. More frequent, though by no means less interesting, is the employment in liturgic compositions of the headings of consecutive verses taken from the Bible. Thus, in a Piyut for the "Rejoicing of the Law" (ninth day of Tabernacles), beginning **אֲשֶׁר־הָעָם שְׁלוֹ כָכָה** "Happy is the people who is in such a case," the last division of every stanza constitutes the beginning of a verse taken from the blessing of Moses (Deut. xxxiii). An instance of an attempt at combining a full Bible text with mere headings is to be found in a Piyut of **שְׁמַעוּן בְּרַיְצָח** for the seventh day of Passover ⁴. In this poem, beginning **וַיִּשַׁע שְׁוֹשָׁנִי פָרָה** "And he saved the

¹ Author unknown ; see Zunz, *Literaturgeschichte der Synagog. Poesie*, p. 70. Some, however, discover in the Piyut the name of its writer שלמה.

² There are three stanzas headed by the letter π , and one stanza not in alphabetical order is introduced between stanzas three and four.

³ The Biblical passage in the Piyut reads thus—**אך בחמשה עשר יום בחדש** השביעי חתנו את חג ה' שבעת ימים; ולקחתם לכם ביום הראשון פרי עץ הדר כפות תמרים ענף עץ עבות ערבי נהל ושמחתם לפני ה' אלהיכם שבעת ימים; והנחתם אותו חג לה' שבעת ימים בשנה חתה עולם לדורותיכם; בנסות השבו שבעת ימים כל האדמה בישראל ישבו בכבד; למען ידעו דורותיכם כי בנסות הושבתי את בני ישראל בהוציא אותם מארץ מצרים; וידבר משה את המעשר לפני ה' ויאמר לפני ה' אלהי ישראל ואלהיך ואלהי כל העם אשר באת אלך ממצרים עד הנה. Cf. with it Lev. xxiii. 39 to end of chapter. The Bible quotations in the remaining stanzas of the Piyut are taken from the lesson on the same festival in Deut. xvi.

⁴ Not mentioned by Zunz among the Piyutim of Simeon bar Isaac. But the name of the author appears twice in the Piyut as an acrostic.

lilies in their bloom," every stanza is divided into three divisions. The initial divisions of the stanzas contain the headings of the successive verses of *אז ישיר*, "the Song of Moses" (Exod. xiv. 30-xv. 19), whilst in its final divisions are embodied the whole of the 114th and part of the 115th Psalms. These selections from "Hallel" set forth the wonderful working of Nature "when the children of Israel came out from Egypt." In comparison with such elaborate schemes, the employment of stray scriptural verses would seem an easy task, and certainly these enter largely into most of the Hebrew liturgical, as also into non-liturgical compositions. Yet, in such cases, the choice and arrangement of the various verses afforded sufficient scope for the exercise of the poetic genius. Compare, e.g., the *Piyut* for the seventh day of Passover, *אי פתרום בעברך*, "When thou didst pass through the land of Pathros (Egypt)," where the verses all contain Biblical references to song and praise¹. Or again, the elegy of Abraham Ibn Ezra on the untimely death of his son Isaac, in which every stanza concludes with an apt Bible quotation ending in the word *צחק*².

There are two other examples of the use made of the Bible for tassellated composition, to which reference must here be made. Both are connected with the break up of a Biblical verse and the employment of its constituent parts as headings or endings for different paragraphs of a *Piyut*. In the one instance, only a single word from the

¹ This *Piyut* is referred to in *Tosaphot Pesachim*, 116^b. The author is *שימון* *גר יצחק*. The poem is based on what are known as the *עשר שירות*, "ten songs." These include Israel's Passover Song in Egypt (ref. Isa. xxx. 29), the Song at the Red Sea (Exod. xv), the Song of the Well (Num. xxi), the Song of Joshua (ref. Josh. x. 13), the Song of Deborah (Judges v), the Song of David (2 Sam. xxii), the Song of Dedication (Ps. xxx), Solomon's Dedication Song (2 Chron. vi), the Song of Jehoshaphat (ref. 2 Chron. xx. 56), and the Song of the Future (ref. Isa. xlii. 10). The ten songs are enumerated in various ways by different authorities; cp. e. g. the Targum to the Song of Songs, ver. 1, and the *Mechilta* to the Song of Moses.

² The poems of Abraham Ibn Ezra, ed. Achiasaf; "Songs of Sorrow," Song 18.

verse is quoted in each section. As an illustration may be taken the Piyut for Purim by Eleazar Kalir. Each Hebrew word of Esther ii. 17 heads each paragraph. The other instance is even more interesting. It is found in the יצור Piyut for the day of Atonement. A verse from the Book of Jeremiah (x. 7), *מי לא יראך מלך הגוים כי לך יאתה כי בכל חכמי הגוים ובכל מלכותם מאין כמוך*, forms the embroidered material in the following way: *מי* "who" heads the first section of the Piyut. *מי לא* "who not" begins the second. *מי לא יראך* "who shall not fear thee" commences the third; and so on. The words of the Biblical selection are made use of in the form of an arithmetical progression.

It will be noticed that the Bible passages selected by the Poetanim for their subject-matter were such as either belonged to the scriptural lessons appointed for those occasions—special sabbaths, festivals or fasts—or bore some allusion to them. The Piyut formed in fact a kind of poetic homily based on scriptural texts and interspersed with apt Biblical quotations. Thus (as already noticed above), the twenty-third chapter of Leviticus, which treats of the Feast of Tabernacles, is contained in the Piyut for Succoth, the Song of Moses, and also the Song of Songs (peculiarly appropriate to the festival of Spring), are inwoven in the liturgical poetry for Passover, whilst into the Piyut for Pentecost are introduced the Ten Commandments, some verses from Ps. lxviii, and also the following part of Prov. viii. 22–ix. 1: "The Lord possessed me in the beginning of his way, before his works of old, &c." This selection from the Book of Proverbs is very appropriate in the light of Rabbinic interpretation which identifies the sayings of wisdom with the words of the Law.

II. *Allusive Use.*

The allusive quotation of the Bible in Hebrew poetry may be divided into two sections, the first is exemplified by the Seder Hymn of Janai *הלילה בחצי יוהי*, to which reference

has already been made. The following translation of several stanzas of this hymn illustrates its characteristic use.

(1) "Thou didst give victory to the 'righteous sojourner' when he divided his band of rescuers in the night."

(This refers to Abraham's expedition for the rescue of Lot, Gen. xiv. 15.)

(2) "Thou didst cause Laban to tremble at night."

(This allusion is to the memorable meeting between Jacob and Laban, which took place in Gilead at night, Gen. xxxi. 29.)

(3) "The Egyptians found not their strong ones (the firstborn) when they were roused in the night" (Exod. xii. 30).

(4) "When presumptuous Sennacherib attacked thy city, thou didst slay his whole host in the night" (2 Kings xix. 35).

Here, every stanza has reference to some Biblical event or episode, and the allusion is made in the poet's own language.

To this type belong many of the Piyutim of Kalir. Compare e.g. his "Commemorative Hymns" זכרונות, which occur in the liturgy for the New Year. The following quotation illustrates the suggestiveness of the poem:—

"May God look down upon and remember Israel, the object of his design even from the beginning, the choice fruit seen at the beginning (Jer. ii. 3), a root of the ripe growth found at the beginning (Hos. ix. 10)¹."

It is to be noted that these Hebrew poets did not confine their allusive material to the Bible. They drew largely from post-Biblical literature. Thus, for the liturgical poetry of Sabbath Chanuka, use is made of the Second Book of the Maccabees, of Judith, and the Megillath Antiochus, and a further interesting example of apocryphal literature

¹ זכר שמבראשית : הביאת ראשית : שורש בכור ראשית : ירא וזכור : This forms one stanza of the allusive poem, beginning כל מנעש.

employed by a Poetan is to be found in a recently discovered fragment (published by Dr. Gaster) of a Piyut for the second day of שבועות, wherein is embodied a part of the book of Tobit, מעשה טוביה.¹

The other mode of using the Bible allusively in Hebrew poetry is of higher character, as will be shown presently². There lie scattered over the whole field of Hebrew liturgic poetry a great number of pregnant and illuminating phrases which bring before the minds of their readers the full force of an idea or the vivid details of a narrative. They not only bear testimony to the poetic powers of the writers, but they presuppose on the part of the reader a fair familiarity with the Bible, for without a thorough knowledge of its every page much of the beauty of these Hebrew prayers, with their suggestive allusions and exquisite gems, would inevitably fail of appreciation. By this artistic contrivance, the liturgical poetry received a lustre and brilliancy. It thereby gained a richness of idiomatic expression, a grandeur of poetic ideas. Thus, the heavens are not only called שמים, but have the appellation רק applied to them, "the garment," in allusion to Isa. xl. 22, "He stretcheth the heavens as a garment." By a kind of paronomasia they bear the term כבודו, "His glory," in reference to Ps. cxiii. 4, על השמים כבודו, "His glory is upon the heavens." They are also spoken of as ראי, "The mirror," see Job xxxvii. 18. By a similar loftiness of

¹ For a similar use of the apocryphal writings in secular poetry, see article "The Book of Delights of Joseph Zabara," *J. Q. R.*, vol. VI. Zunz in his *Literaturgeschichte*, p. 25, refers to the use made in the Jewish Liturgy of other Apocryphal books. The influence of Ecclesiasticus is especially apparent in the *Abodah* Piyutim, which give a description of the Temple Service on the day of Atonement, and the recent discovery of the Hebrew Original of Ben-Sira promises to render the task of tracing this influence extremely interesting and valuable.

² An early use of a Biblical phrase in an allusive sense is found in the recently discovered Hebrew text of Ecclus. xxix. 23^b ירהפך למלח משה, Sodom, the doomed city, is referred to as משה in allusion to Gen. xiii. 10 כי כלה משה, vide *J. Q. R.*, IX, 556, and the Hebrew monthly *Hashiloach*, III, 138 footnote.

ideas, the earth is designated נשיה, "that which brings forgetfulness¹," see Ps. lxxxviii. 13, and also as הרום, "God's footstool," see Isa. lxvi. 1. Very interesting are the many names by which Israel is described, each of which is based on some Biblical phrase. The Book of Isaiah is especially rich in such appellations, and so is the Song of Songs, from which we have—"The lily," "The Rose of Sharon," "The perfect and bright One," "He that cometh from the wilderness," "She who sleeps but whose heart is awake." Other Biblical books are the sources of such varied nomenclature, as—"The scattered²," "The smallest of nations³," "The bird of the wilderness⁴," "The bird of the house⁵," "The tame dove⁶," "The bride of love and youth⁷," "Who has forgotten what happiness means⁸," "Who is not abandoned⁹." Many terms are made to refer to the patriarchs and other Biblical characters, to the Temple and the Torah, to Nature and the supernatural, whilst the names for God in liturgic poetry are as numerous and varied as are the manifold references to his attributes and powers in our scriptures. And it need hardly be said that these allusive terms are not employed indiscriminately, but each is carefully selected to suit the nature and tone of the composition. Note, for example, the fullness and force of the allusive term in the poetic line: קול צפצפה, "ינה אלם," "(Israel) the silent dove uttered a pathetic cry¹⁰,"

¹ Cp. the opening line of an anonymous Pismon on the death of Moses, או בקרב זה אומן להשיג מנשיה "When the time came near for the faithful shepherd to leave the earth." Brit. Mus. MS. Or. 2587, p. 37.

² Jer. l. 17.

³ Deut. vii. 7.

⁴ Ps. lxxxiv. 4.

⁵ Ps. lxxx. 4.

⁶ Isa. lx. 8.

⁷ Jer. ii. 2.

⁸ Lam. iii. 17.

⁹ Isa. lxii. 4.

¹⁰ A reference to Ps. lvi. 1, where ינה אלם רחוקים, "the silent dove among strangers," is taken to represent the people of Israel. Cp. the use of ינה in Ps. lxxiv. 19. The full phrase ינה אלם רחוקים is used by Abraham Ibn Ezra in a pathetic Piyut on Israel's sufferings, entitled על היורה "Concerning the dove" (Poems of Ibn Ezra, ed. Achiasaf, poem 128). This poem contains the happy use of the Biblical verse ולא מצאה הינה מנוח לכה רגלה "And the dove (i. e. Israel) found no rest for the sole of her foot" (Gen. viii. 9). The popularity in liturgic poetry of the simile of the dove for Israel is

and of the ingenious application by Kalir, in his poem on "The Four Species," of this character of scriptural exegesis:—

"I will praise with the *הדר* the fruit of glory, *פֶּטֶחַ הַדָּר וְהַדָּר* (Ps. civ. 2), God who robed himself in majestic glory, him will I extol with the *הָרִיסִים* 'the myrtles,' *צֵן בֵּין הָהָרִיסִים* (Zech. i. 8), who stood between the myrtle bushes, and I will exalt with the *עֲרֵבוֹת*, 'waving of willows,' *רוֹכֵב עַל עֲרֵבוֹת* (Ps. lviii. 5), the Lord who rides upon the fleeting clouds¹."

III. *Quasi-Midrashic Use.*

The uses of the Bible in relation to Neo-Hebrew poetry considered in the foregoing sections are of a character where the original meaning of the verse or phrase so used is closely followed in its literal and accepted sense. The following observations will deal with those cases in which Biblical expressions are employed in a totally different sense². By the term "Quasi-Midrashic," I mean the interpretation of a scriptural phrase in a moral, spiritual, or philosophical sense. Jewish scholars of the Middle Ages very frequently cultivated both philosophy and literature, and they were in the habit of clothing their philosophical conceptions in pure Biblical language. Their favourite phrases became a kind of idiomatic and standard formulae conveying in an original and striking fashion the leading idea which the poet had previously put forth in many words. The "Royal Crown" of Ibn Gabirol abounds in Biblical quotations which are made to convey philosophical notions. The linguistic skill and extreme beauty of this

evidenced by the fact that no less than twenty-two Piyutim beginning with "the dove" are mentioned by Zunz in his *Literaturgeschichte der Syn. Poesie*.

¹ *עֲרֵבוֹת* has a double meaning, (1) = *עֲרֵבוֹת* willows, and (2) fleeting clouds.

² Such Biblical usage we meet with in the Hebrew text of Eccles. xl. 2^p. The expression *אִם כָּל הָיָה* "The mother of all living" is used of the earth, while in Gen. iii. 20 it designates Eve. See Prof. Bacher's notes on Sirach's vocabulary, *J. Q. R.*, IX, p. 556.

poem can, of course, be appreciated only in the original Hebrew. Yet a few examples, even if rendered into our vernacular, may not be out of place.

(1) "God is Omniscient," the poet begins, "both the thoughts and the deeds of man are fully known to him. The Divine eye surveys man's exterior, whilst his searching light penetrates into the innermost recesses of the human heart." The poet concludes, מִבֵּית וּמִחוּץ תִּצְפֶּה, "From within and without thou shalt scan him" (Exod. xxv. 11). (In its original sense, the phrase means "Thou shalt overlay it (the Ark) from within and without" with pure gold. The poet here plays upon the several meanings of the verb צָפָה, "to cover," "to look up." Comp. יִצָּף, Gen. xxxi. 49.)

(2) "God is beyond man's comprehension. The human mind longs to know him. Yet it can but see him in part; it cannot perceive him altogether." אַפֶּס קִצְתוֹ תִּרְאֶה וְכֹלֹךָ לֹא תִרְאֶה (Num. xxiii. 13), "Thou shalt behold but a part of it, but the whole of it thou shalt not behold." (This passage was addressed to Balaam by Balak when enticing him to cast his evil enchantment on the encampment of Israel¹.)

(3) "Thou, O Lord, art the true source of light whom the soul of man can only behold in its state of perfect purity. Therefore only in the world to come—the final abode of pure souls—can the Divine light undimmed be rightly enjoyed. On high, the Lord will appear full bright." בְּהַר ה' יִרְאֶה (Gen. xxiii. 4). (The poet may here have thought of the similarity between בְּהַר "on the mount," and בְּהַר "brightness." At all events, the original Biblical phrase is here used in all its suggestiveness.)

By far the greater part of these Quasi-Midrashic interpretations of Biblical terms belongs to those sections of Hebrew poetry which treat of the soul, its relation to the human mind, its sojourn in the frail tenement, and of its ultimate return to its heavenly abode. The majority of these Biblical quotations, which are very numerous in

¹ The same expression is used in the same philosophic sense by Charizi in his Introduction to the *Tachkemoni*, p. 5 (Achiasaf edition).

mediaeval poetry, are employed with extremely happy effect. A catalogue of them with appropriate notes would be highly interesting. But here only a few examples must suffice.

"The human soul is a spark of God, a breath of life, breathed into the inanimate body, and thus the lifeless substance is turned into a living creature, because the Divine Being hath come down to it with fire" (Exod. xix. 18), מפני אשר ירד עליו ה' באש.¹ (Note the philosophical sense given to this verse from Exodus. According to the original text Mount Sinai is the object of the Divine descent. Here it is the human body into which the sacred fire, i. e. the human soul, is made to enter—a fine and beautiful image.)

In a dispute between the body and the soul about the cause of man's downward career, the soul replies in the wording of the Psalmist, אייה לי כי גרתי משך Ps. cxx, "Woe unto me that I sojourn with Meshech (i. e. that which drags me downward)²." Again, "When the soul burdened with sin seeks admission to the heavenly abode it is scarcely recognized, and those who gaze at her disfigurement exclaim הלא נעמי (Ruth i. 20), 'Is this indeed Naomi?' (i. e. once so beautiful)³."

"I am sad and sorrowful," says Immanuel de Romi in the famous prayer of his Machberoth, "when I remember that my lofty pride will be changed into the lowliness of the grave. But I gain solace and comfort in the contemplation of a future life. I am cheered by the thought that 'after I am withered away great pleasure is restored unto me,'" אחרי בלתי היתה לי עדינה (Gen. xviii. 12). This is a very apt and ingenious application of a Biblical passage to an idea entirely different to that in which it is originally used. בלתי carries with it the idea of dis-

¹ *Royal Crown and Tachkemoni*, Introductory chapter, p. 4.

² Charizi's *Tachkemoni*, chap. 13. Note that in mediaeval Jewish philosophy משך is a usual term for "body." Charizi, however, seems to ascribe a more poetical etymology to it.

³ *Machberoth Immanuel*, chap. 8.

solution, cp. לבלות שואל, whilst ערנה is an obvious reference to future life. Cp. ערן.

Here the question presents itself whether the moral and spiritual meanings assigned to the various phrases in Hebrew poetry had been originally fixed by the authors of the Midrashic writings. This question acquires additional force when we note that many of the Biblical phrases bear exactly the same Quasi-Midrashic sense, when quoted by different writers extending over a long period of time. The recurrence of such phrases may be a mere coincidence, but the probability that they had their origin in Rabbinic literature is *prima facie* a very strong one. So far, I have not been able to trace these Quasi-Midrashic uses of Bible texts to early Rabbinical sources. That the Midrash and Agada had a marked influence upon this particular form of poetic adaptation is to my mind quite certain. There are several instances where this influence is undoubtedly apparent. Take, e. g., Charizi's use of the phrase כִּי אֵשׁ יֵצֵא מִחֶשְׁבֹן (Num. xxi. 28), "For a fire comes out of Heshbon," to describe how the Divine wrath is often kindled by the account of man's sinful deeds. This evidently is based upon the parallel Talmudic interpretation of the same Biblical passage in Baba bathra, 78^b, בָּאוּ חֶשְׁבֹן בָּאוּ וְנֶחֱשֶׁב, "Come unto Heshbon (the reckoning); come let us look into our account with the world¹."

A further instance of this mode of interpretation is afforded by a passage in Exodus Rabbah. The Midrash compares Esther's beauty to the fair queen of night, which can join the Jewish queen in saying, וְאֲנִי לֹא נִקְרָאתִי לְבָא אֵל, "As for me, I have not been called to the king for thirty days" (Esther iv. 10), a witty reference to the period of the moon's revolution round the earth.

This is very similar in character to Ibn Gabirol's description of sunrise and sunset, in the Biblical phrase בָּעֶרֶב הָיָא

¹ A curious title for a work on Arithmetic, by Joseph ben Moses Zarfathi, is עֵר סִיחֹן, for Heshbon was Sihon's city. See Neubauer, Cat. Heb. MSS. in the London Beth Hamidresh, § 133.

באה ובבקר היא שבה "In the evening she went forth, and in the morning she returned" (Esther ii. 14)¹.

Immanuel de Romi gives a prescription for dealing with the *יצר הרע* (the evil inclination). He puts it in the pithy Biblical phrase *לה' תזבחנו*, "offer it to the Lord," i. e. subdue it to the service of God. Compare this with the passage in Sanhedrin, 43^b, *מעלה עליו הכתוב כאילו*, "He who sacrifices his evil inclinations does homage to God both now and hereafter"².

IV. *Use of Proper Names.*

Bible names have a mystic charm of their own. Hidden in them are many a poetic idea or profound moral teaching. From a philological and scientific point of view, a considerable amount of interest also attaches to this subject. Not less fascinating is their study from the Midrashic and Agadic standpoint. Rabbinical literature is full of pithy sayings, fine allegories, and happy conceits, based upon the real or supposed meanings of Bible names. What could be more fanciful than the use made in the *Pirque Aboth* (Ethics of the Fathers), of the names mentioned in the Itinerary of Israel (Num. xxi. 19) *ומנחליאל במות* "from Nachliel" the heritage of God, i. e. the study of the Law, "to Bamoth," high places, i. e. to an exalted mental state, implying that "whosoever labours in the vineyard of the Law shall be exalted." The Talmud and Midrashim abound in instances of the various uses made of the proper names of the Bible, but this attractive field is too extensive to be surveyed here³. I confine myself to only a few examples of their use in mediaeval Hebrew poetry. In his "Songs

¹ "Royal Crown." Gabirol is as happy in the use of Biblical phrases in this scientific portion of his great poem as in the more spiritual parts of it.

² Vide also Bacher, *Die Agada der Palest. Amoräer*, Part I, p. 132.

³ For a few instances see references in Bacher, *Die Agada der Palest. Amoräer*, Part I, pp. 156, note 3; 265, note 6; 266, note 1; 274, note 7. See also the Rabbinic principle (*Lev. Rabbah*, chap. i, § 3), *אי ניהן וברי הימים* לא אלא ליריש and its application, *ibid*.

of Sorrow," Abraham Ibn Ezra, describing the rapid advance of old age, aptly says, *הנה דלק אחרי לבן רץ ויעבור את הכושי* "Behold Laban (i. e. the white gray hair) pursued after me. He swiftly overran the Cushi (i. e. the black)¹."

A lover, desiring to convey a message of affection to Ophrah, his beloved one, sent her a missive containing the phrase *מעפרה מצפה גלעד* (Jud. xi. 29), which is good Hebrew for "a kiss from Ophrah is the height of joy"².

Immanuel likewise relates a story about a certain lady who made riches a necessary qualification in the object of her choice. In those days the Shadchan was a recognized intermediary, and an admirer of the lady who had heard of the indispensable condition conveyed his ability to fulfil his part of the contract by sending a message to the Shadchan in the following quotation from Genesis (ii. 11), *חווילה אשר שם הזהב*, a witty *double entendre*, meaning "Tell her that gold is there."

A minister, whose lot had fallen in a congregation the members of which were obstinate and rebellious, managed by dint of perseverance to bring about a better feeling, and he laboured so hard among them, *עד האסף מרים* "until their rebelliousness ceased."

V. *The Mnemonic Use of the Bible.*

The use of the Bible in a Mnemonic form can also be traced to Rabbinic origin. The Talmudic quotations of the Bible, introduced by the expressions *וסימנך*, as also the use of the Biblical verses as *גמטריאות* and *notarikon*, all come under this class. Many of these, however, are artificial. But in later Hebrew poetry the Mnemonic use of the Bible

¹ Poems of Ibn Ezra, ed. Achiasaf, poem 20. "He overran the Cushi" is taken from 2 Sam. xviii. 23.

² *מצפה* being taken as a compound of *מץ* "the pressure of" (Prov. xxx. 33) and *פה*; and similarly *גלעד* as a compound of *גל* and *עד* "joy for ever." Cp. an interesting use of *ברשבע* "Bathsheba," for the seventh day of the week, in a Cabbalistic Sabbath Hymn of Mordechai Dato with the refrain *לכבוד שבת* "In honour of Sabbath." Brit. Mus. MS. Add. 22,094, p. 11.

is very clear and striking, and served well its purpose. Thus the date of the rise of Hebrew poetry proper is fixedly impressed upon the mind by Charizi's singularly happy verse, התעוררו לנגן על השמינית "They awoke to song on the Sheminith—an eight-stringed instrument," i.e. the eighth century.

Several important mnemonics, in virtue of which the festival days of the Jewish calendar are easily calculated, have also been fixed by certain phrases in the Bible. Thus the passage (Num. ix. 11) יעשו אותו על מצות ומרורים typifies both the festival of Passover (מצות) and the Fast of Ab (מרורים), the whole passage conveying the mnemonic that both the first day of the festival and the day of the fast invariably fall on the same day of the week.

The verse (Prov. vi. 23) כי נר מצוה ותורה אור, serves to convey a similar useful piece of information, viz. that the first day of Chanukah falls on the same day of the week as the first day of the previous Pentecost; the נר מצוה signifying the duty of kindling the lights, and תורה representing the Law which was given on Mount Sinai, the anniversary of which is solemnized on Pentecost¹.

An interesting chapter on the mnemonic use of Bible texts is supplied by the *Azharoth*, i.e. Piyutim on the divine precepts. The familiar *Azharoth* of Zerachiah Halevi for the Sabbath preceding the Passover Festival contain several instances. But I will here quote two examples from the less known *Azharoth* of Kalonymos Nasi².

¹ This mnemonic, however, is only applicable when the year is either regular (i.e. when Cheshvon has 29 days and Kislev 30) or defective (i.e. Cheshvon and Kislev have each 29 days). The rule does not hold when the year is redundant (i.e. when Cheshvon and Kislev have each 30 days). See the Piyut for the Sabbath intervening between *Parashath Shekalim* and *Zachor*. The phrase כי נר מצוה ותורה אור is used as a mnemonic in a somewhat different connexion in Zerachiah Halevi's *Azharoth*. "Search not the unleavened bread by any other but candle-light. 'For the use of candle-light is a commandment and a law.'"

² Brit. Mus. Hagada MS. Add. 14,761, p. 2.

The unleavened bread must be prepared with water drawn on the previous day. And the mnemonic is given in the words of the text (Gen. xxvi. 20), *לֵאמֹר לָנוּ הַמַּיִם*, "So as to say the water has remained overnight¹."

Again, referring to the Seder ceremony of dividing the Passover cake, and putting away part of it for the Afikoumon, the poet wittily uses the mnemonic phrase (1 Sam. xx. 37), *הַחֲצִי מִמֶּךָ וְהַלֵּאָה*, "Put the half of it away from thee²."

VI. *Miscellaneous Uses.*

The miscellaneous uses to which the Bible has been made to do service comprise specimens of a humorous and satirical character. They treat of varied secular subjects of wine, love, friendship, elegies, eulogies, the seasons of the year, the wonders of nature, and in short embrace a wide field of criticism of every aspect of life. But this paper having gone beyond the limits assigned to it, I cannot here enter into further detailed particulars.

I hope, however, that I have not failed to indicate, although inadequately, the great literary influence which the Bible has exercised in building up the poetry of the Jewish race. It has constituted the warp and woof for their prayers and songs, their hymns, and their dirges. In every phase of the communal life, in every vicissitude and joy its spirit and letter have been the guiding influence which has inspired the thoughts and actions of the people of the Book.

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¹ לָנוּ, which in the original text is a preposition, is here taken as a verb root, לִין "to stay overnight." The same mnemonic is used by Zerachiah.

² הַחֲצִי in the text means "the arrow." Here it signifies "the half."